REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Forestry Division

Urban & Community Forestry Assistance Grants

Sponsored by USDA Forest Service



All applications must be submitted via email by 11:59pm CST on August 30, 2024.

Submit applications to: <u>ADA.UCF.grants@agriculture.arkansas.gov</u>

Additional grant resources: <u>www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/forestry/urban-community-forestry</u>

Primary grant contacts:	Kristine Kimbro, Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator
	Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Forestry Division
	kristine.kimbro@agriculture.arkansas.gov

Evette Browning, Tree Equity Grants Coordinator Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Forestry Division <u>evette.browning@agriculture.arkansas.gov</u>

Introduction

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Forestry Division (Forestry Division), in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, announces the 2024 Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Grant Assistance Program. This program is designed to encourage projects that support and promote the development and sustainability of sound urban and community forestry programs throughout Arkansas.

Funding Sources

There are two sources of funding available for this grant opportunity:

1. Arkansas's IRA funding

(Federal Grant ID#: 23-DG-11083105-500)

- a. Up to \$1.4 million in IRA funding is available for IRA subawards (maximum of \$500k per project).
- b. IRA funds <u>MUST</u> be used for projects in disadvantaged communities as identified by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). CEJST is a geospatial mapping tool to identify census tracts that are overburdened by climate change, pollution, or other environmental or socioeconomic factors. Communities identified through CEJST are considered disadvantaged because they are overburdened and underserved.
- c. Projects funded through IRA subawards may have substantially larger budgets, may span a longer time period for implementation/completion, and do not require the grantee to provide matching funds.

2. Non-IRA Community Forestry Assistance funding

(Federal Grant ID#: 23-DG-11083105-001)

- a. Up to \$30 thousand is available for Community Forestry Assistance subawards (maximum of \$10k per project).
- b. Community Forestry Assistance subawards do not have to focus exclusively on disadvantaged communities and may be used to fund projects implemented anywhere in Arkansas.
- c. Projects funded through Community Forestry Assistance subawards are limited to smaller budgets, must be completed within one year, and require the grantee to provide 1:1 match funding.

Legislative Authority

Subtitle D, Sec. 23003 (a). State and Private Forestry Conservation Programs via the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) appropriated \$1.5 billion to provide multiyear, programmatic, competitive grants. Of this total allocation, \$1.875 million was allocated to Arkansas to be distributed over a 5-year period. Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) is also covered under the Agency's Justice40 Initiative established through Executive Order 13985. To advance the mission of Justice40, proposals that deliver the benefits of IRA investments through established partnerships with local organizations working to support underserved communities experiencing low tree canopy and environmental justice will receive priority consideration. USDA is a partner on the Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Promoting Equitable Access to Nature in Nature-Deprived Communities, which seeks to reduce the number of people without access to parks and nature in their communities. The America the Beautiful Initiative supports the prioritization of locally led conservation and park projects in communities that disproportionately lack access to nature and its benefits.

Objectives of the Urban & Community Forestry Program

Federal Program Objectives

The objectives of the Urban & Community Forestry Grant Program are to:

- 1. Integrate Urban & Community Forestry into all scales of planning;
- 2. Promote the role of Urban & Community Forestry in human health and wellness;
- 3. Cultivate diversity, equity, and leadership within the Urban Forestry community;
- 4. Strengthen Urban & Community Forest health and biodiversity for long-term resilience;
- 5. Improve Urban & Community Forest management, maintenance, and stewardship;
- 6. Diversify, leverage, and increase funding for Urban & Community Forestry;
- 7. Increase public awareness and environmental education to promote stewardship; and
- 8. Prioritize projects focusing work on extreme heat mitigation, urban wood utilization, urban food forests, and workforce development.

Arkansas Program Goals

State program goals for the Urban & Community Forestry Program are to:

- 1. Foster strong partnerships with various organizations, city, and county governments;
- 2. Improve Urban Forestry knowledge;
- 3. Increase the number of communities participating in the Tree City USA program;
- 4. Increase participation of communities in community forest management through comprehensive planning strategies;
- 5. Encourage communities to recognize the public health benefits of trees; and
- 6. Increase community preparedness and resilience by developing pre-storm preparation and storm mitigation plans.

Eligibility Information

Funds may be awarded to units of local governments (city, town, county), non-profit organizations, tribal entities, or educational institutions. Other organizations, such as community tree volunteer groups, neighborhood associations, or civic groups which are not 501(c)3 are eligible, but must apply in partnership with a non-profit organization or with their local government.

All applicants applying for a federally funded award must have BOTH a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Information on obtaining a UEI is available here: <u>https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-</u> <u>service/office-of-systems-management/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-</u> <u>information-kit/unique-entity-identifier-update</u>. Records will be maintained for at least 3 years following final payment.

Eligible projects must meet Federal and State Program Objectives. The U&CF Grant Program is intended to support new initiatives, programs, projects, staff positions, or activities not currently being funded through other sources.

Funding Criteria and Proposal Review

Only applications that meet all General Requirements will be reviewed. Proposal ranking is based on the following criteria:

- ✓ Clearly defines the purpose or objective of project
- ✓ Clearly states goals, purpose, and/or mission statement of the applicant
- ✓ Meets a demonstrated urban & community forestry need
- ✓ Helps strengthen and develop local urban & community forestry capacity
- ✓ Meets federal and state program objectives
- ✓ Involves various partnerships
- ✓ Local visibility or awareness of the project
- ✓ Long-term benefit of the project
- ✓ Clear presentation of budget and use of budget worksheet (enclosed)
- ✓ Cost effectiveness
- ✓ Realistic time frame for completion
- ✓ Acknowledgment of IRA UCF contribution language/signage
- ✓ Can be duplicated and/or used as a model in other cities
- ✓ Demonstrated ability of the applicant to follow through on project completion
- Enhances environmental, social, cultural, historical, psychological, and economical values
- ✓ Clearly defined maintenance plan for projects that involve any planting

Grant Timeframe

Approved projects can begin only after you have received a fully executed copy of your grant award. Costs incurred prior to the date on your award letter must be pre-approved by the Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator and will be allowed only in limited circumstances. All projects must be completed within the timeline appropriate for the category under which they were awarded, up to a maximum timeline of 3 years, including any extensions.

Reports

Periodic progress reports and a final report are required of all grantees. A final accomplishment report that includes a financial report must be submitted at project conclusion prior to final payout. A schedule of reporting deadlines will be included in award acceptance documents.

Payment Process

Funds awarded under the grant are available on a reimbursement basis after report submittal and in accordance with a payment schedule agreed to in advance. Grantees must file a *Request for Reimbursement* (included in the award paperwork package) and send records of expenditures along with documentation of all costs to the Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator. Arkansas reserves the right to make partial payments subject to completion of scheduled milestones. The Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator will evaluate the progress of the project to determine eligibility for full payment.

Application Format

Written proposals and a budget worksheet should be included in addition to the signed onepage Application Form below. The proposal narrative should not exceed three pages. Applicants may also include maps, photos, etc. in addition to the narrative. Clear and concise proposals should address an urban and community forestry need and meet one or more of the objectives of the Urban & Community Forestry Assistance Program (see page 3). Information that should be presented in the narrative and budget includes:

- The purpose, objective, or mission statement of the applying organization and the purpose and objectives of the project. The project's purpose should be explained in one concise paragraph.
- Explain why the project is important. Identify the project audience, why they should be addressed and describe what condition will be changed because of the project. The narrative should include these elements:
 - Activities List all the activities you will undertake to complete the project.
 - Partnerships and Participants List project personnel, volunteers, participating organizations, etc.
 - Public, Educational Benefits, and Community Engagement Strategies for the project should also be described. Communications and signage will attribute projects as being made possible by a grant from the USDA Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry Program as part of the Inflation Reduction Act.
 - Underserved/Disadvantaged Benefit Provide a written description of how funds will benefit underserved and disadvantaged communities. Provide a screenshot of the geographic area and/or areas from the approved online data tools described in this RFP package.
 - Administration Specify who will be responsible for project management and record keeping.
 - **Timetable** Show project start date, project milestone completion dates, and total project completion dates.
 - End Product/Result List specific deliverables to be accomplished with funds (i.e., brochures, packets, videos, publications, websites, proposed newsletter articles, street tree inventory, management plans, etc.) and identify the recipients of or target audience for the deliverable (i.e., students, employees, civic organization, Chamber of Commerce, citizens in _____ community). This may be written as a bulleted list with descriptions and clarification.
- 3. A detailed project **budget** should include sources and description of materials, maintenance costs, and costs of professional services. Applicants should use the budget worksheet attached to this RFP Package. The budget will be compared to the project narrative to determine if proposed expenditures are reasonable and allowable. A maximum of 20% of the total award can be used towards administrative expenses. Projects applying under Category 3 must also provide a budget that includes in-kind costs/matching expenses.

Categories that might be used in the budget include:

- **Personnel*** List all staff positions by title. Give annual salary, percentage of time assigned to the project, and total cost for the budget period.
- Fringe Benefits Identify the percentage used, the basis for its computation, and the types of benefits included.

- **Travel** Specify the mileage, per diem, estimated number of trips, and other costs for each type of travel. Please visit <u>www.gsa.gov/perdiem</u> to determine the appropriate federal rates.
- **Supplies** All tangible personal property other than "equipment" which is valued at \$5.00 or greater. Supplies must not exceed \$5,000 per individual item. The budget detail should identify supplies to be purchased.
- **Contractual*** Identify each proposed contract and specify its purpose, nature, and estimated cost.
- **Other** List each item in sufficient detail for grant administrators to determine the reasonableness of the cost.

*Arkansas assumes no liability for any contractors, volunteers, or local government employees working on any projects.

Proposal Submission and Timeline

*APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED VIA EMAIL BY 11:59PM CST ON AUGUST 30th, 2024.

- Fill out and sign the grant proposal application form, budget worksheet, and a state W9. These documents must be submitted with your proposal package. Non-profit organizations must submit documentation of 501-(c)-3 status (IRS letter or copy of annual tax filing).
- Submit a scanned copy of your proposal, including the application form and documents specified in #1 above, via email, by 11:59pm on August 30, 2024, to <u>ADA.UCF.grants@agriculture.arkansas.gov</u>. The Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator or a Forestry Division designee will notify all applicants regarding receipt of their application. If you do not receive a confirmation email once your application is submitted, please contact Kristine Kimbro or Evette Browning (page 1).

The Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator will notify successful applicants of funding approval as soon as possible. Successful applicants must submit required state and federal forms **within thirty (30) days** of the date of the award notice. Municipalities needing city/town council or Board of Supervisor approval must contact the Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator for an extension of this time, if needed.

Grant Preparation Assistance

Assistance in developing proposals is available to all potential applicants from the Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator. We will also provide guidance as to a project's suitability under this grant program. Applicants are encouraged to discuss potential projects with the Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator before proposal submittal. Contact information is found on page 1 of the application package and below:

Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator:

Kristine Kimbro, kristine.kimbro@agriculture.arkansas.gov

Tree Equity Grants Coordinator:

Evette Browning, evette.browning@agriculture.arkansas.gov

Eligible Project Categories

The two subaward opportunities for this grant cycle, Arkansas's IRA subawards and non-IRA Community Forestry Assistance subawards, each have specific requirements. Arkansas reserves the right to reject and approve partial funding for any and all proposals. Records will be maintained for at least 3 years following final payment.

- A. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding
 - a. IRA funding available for this cycle is up to \$1.4 million total.
 - b. Available for projects in Categories 1 and 2 below
- B. Non-IRA Community Forestry Assistance funds
 - a. Non-IRA funding available for this cycle is up to \$30 thousand total.
 - b. Available for projects in Category 3 below

Each opportunity has specific requirements, so please carefully review the following descriptions and requirements.

Ineligible Projects/Activities

Ineligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- research
- property acquisition and related costs
- construction and capital improvement projects
- equipment purchases
- food or beverage purchases
- gift cards

A. IRA Subawards:

IRA funding is available for match-free grants. Grants can be funded up to \$500,000 per project.

IRA qualified projects that provide 100% of the benefits to disadvantaged communities identified by CEJST qualify for a match waiver as per the IRA guidelines. To justify the match waiver, verification of the project's location on the CEJST must be provided along with a written explanation of how the project will impact a disadvantaged community.

CEJST is a geospatial mapping tool to identify census tracts that are overburdened by climate change, pollution or other environmental or socioeconomic factors. These communities identified through CEJST are considered disadvantaged because they are overburdened and underserved. Other government sanctioned data sources, such as EJScreen, may be considered for identifying disadvantaged communities, but they must be used as supplemental tools to CEJST. Projects or programs of work completed 100% in disadvantaged communities identified by CEJST will qualify for IRA funding.

IRA qualified projects will be eligible for funding up to \$500,000 per project for up to three years based on need and completed milestones. Please specify your desired grant timeline during the application process. In addition, IRA qualifying projects do not have to provide project match and up to 20% of the total ask can be used for administrative expenses. Administrative expenses can include direct personnel and fringe, service contracts, supplies,

etc., for work directly on the IRA project, and supporting documentation is required. Acknowledgement of IRA UCF contribution is required for printed materials and signage.

B. Non-IRA Community Forestry Assistance grants:

Non-IRA funding is also available. Grants will be funded up to \$10,000 per project.

These projects do not have to have an exclusive focus on disadvantaged communities, but the potential amount that can be awarded is substantially less and requires that 1:1 matching funds be provided. Non-IRA projects may be selected to receive up to \$10,000 in non-IRA Community Forestry Assistance funds which require a dollar-for-dollar match. Match can be provided in the form of cash, services, or in-kind contributions. Please specify your desired grant timeline during the application process. These projects cannot exceed one year. Indirect expenses are allowable.

Example: If the full project expenses are \$8,000, then the required match is 50% of that total, which is \$4,000. Grantees must match cost-share funds with non-federal funds and/or contributions. Matching cost-share funds or in-kind contributions cannot be used as a match for any other federal cost-share project.

Matching Requirements

IRA qualified projects that provide 100% of the benefits to disadvantaged communities may qualify for a match waiver as per the IRA guidelines. To justify the match waiver, verification of the project's location on the CEJST tool must be provided along with a written explanation of how the project will impact a disadvantaged community.

Non-IRA projects must provide a dollar for dollar (50/50) match with non-federal funds.

These non-federal funds cannot be used as a match for any other Federal cost-share project. The match may include in-kind contributions, volunteer assistance, and private and public (non-Federal) monetary contributions.

Cash purchases are direct, out-of-pocket expenditures for eligible project activities that are supported by paid invoices, signed receipts, or official payroll records. The use of in-kind (noncash) match is valid and encouraged. In-kind match can take the form of volunteer hours, donated materials, donated services, donated office space, or donated equipment associated with the project. Volunteer hours may be applied to the project at rates appropriate to the skill level of the volunteer and/or the nature of the work being performed. The base value for adult volunteer time on a project is \$31.80 per hour. This is the updated rate by the Independent Sector, which is posted on their website, www.independentsector.org, under the research tab. Staff time applied as either grant share or match must be valued at the employee's regular rate of pay. Fringe benefits are also allowable. All matching funds must be specifically related to the proposed project. Documentation of all matching funds must be provided before reimbursement of the grant award will be issued. Assistance provided by federal employees or the Forestry Division may not be claimed as part of the match.

Project Categories

There are three categories under which grant funding may be requested.

- Proposals for **Category 1** and **Category 2** projects **must** deliver 100 percent of the funding/program benefits to underserved communities. If awarded, applicants will <u>not</u> have to provide project match. Applications must clearly describe the scope of work to be performed in applicable underserved communities and identify online data tools referenced to support an underserved community designation. The following tools are accepted, and multiple tools may be used, but CEJST must be used:
 - Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)
 - EPA Environmental Justice and Screening Mapping Tool (EJScreen)
 - EPA EnviroAtlas Interactive Map, Opportunity Zones

All work must be tracked at the level that designates underserved communities.

 Proposals for Category 3 projects do not have to deliver 100 percent of the funding/program benefits to disadvantaged communities, but <u>will be required to</u> provide 1:1 matching funds/in-kind contributions.

All applications should state within which category the project falls.

Category 1 – Program Development & Tree Canopy Management

PURPOSE – To support projects that may take longer than one year to implement, or that require greater funding due to their complexity.

FUNDING REQUEST RANGE – A grant size range of \$10,000 to \$500,000 is appropriate.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES (not an exhaustive list) –Examples include, but are not limited to: tree care worker education/certification; municipal/community tree canopy inventory, planning and management; planting and demonstration projects; workforce development; school greening; educating the public on the valuation of tree benefits; increasing equity and access to urban and community green spaces; increasing urban forest resiliency; storm readiness, response, and recovery program development; establishing urban food forests; urban heat island analysis and extreme heat mitigation; tree board or tree commission development; projects that increase knowledge, awareness, and visibility of urban wood utilization and recycling. Grant funding may be applied to education and outreach materials, demonstration of specialized equipment and techniques for working on smaller interface woodlots, and assessments of the feasibility of recycling and processing urban waste wood. Funds can also be used to develop business plans for public entities or non-profits for an emerging urban wood program. All tree maintenance expenses, removals, and plantings must occur on non-federal public lands.

MATCH/IN-KIND COST REQUIREMENT– If awarded, applicants will <u>not</u> have to provide project match, so long as the project delivers 100 percent of the funding/program benefits to underserved communities.

COMMUNITIES SERVED – Underserved communities exclusively.

PROJECT TIME FRAME – Up to 3 years.

Category 2 – Planting & Education

PURPOSE – To support focused or single-site projects or to provide direct purchasing support to initiatives by entities that lack the resources, staff, and/or infrastructure to process subgrants.

FUNDING REQUEST RANGE – A grant size range of \$1,000 to \$50,000 is appropriate.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES (not an exhaustive list) –Examples include, but are not limited to: tree purchase/establishment; planting supplies (mulch, tree protection, irrigation (no hardline), soil amendments); educational material publication/distribution; tree care training opportunities for public volunteers; workshops that have, in whole or in part, an urban and community forestry focus. All tree maintenance expenses, removals, and plantings must occur on non-federal public lands.

All tree planting projects must meet the following criteria:

- a. Take place on non-federal public property such as city/county parks, schools, playgrounds, greenspaces, rights-of-way, business districts, parking lots, and downtown areas.
- b. Include a tree planting site plan and map using aerial photography or GIS. Locations (addresses, zip codes or GPS coordinates) of all trees must be provided by the end of the project. If applicable, include details of impervious surface removal.
- c. Include a 3-year maintenance plan.
- d. Include a letter of support by the local government or by the Arkansas Department of Transportation if applicant is not the property owner.
- e. Complete and sign the liability waiver included in the application.

Note: If your application is approved, your project will be assigned to a Forestry Division Urban & Community Forestry staff member to review and approve the planting and maintenance plan. If applicable, Forestry Division approval will also be required for any impervious surface removal plans.

MATCH/IN-KIND COST REQUIREMENT– If awarded, applicants will <u>not</u> have to provide project match, so long as the project delivers 100 percent of the funding/program benefits to underserved communities.

COMMUNITIES SERVED – Underserved communities exclusively.

PROJECT TIME FRAME – Up to 1 year.

Category 3 – Program development, tree canopy management, planting, and education projects in communities that do NOT meet the designation of being an underserved community

PURPOSE – To support projects which will deliver less than 100 percent of the funding/program benefits to underserved communities.

FUNDING REQUEST RANGE – A grant size range of \$1,000 to \$10,000 is appropriate.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES (not an exhaustive list) – Same as listed under Category 1 and Category 2 above.

MATCH/IN-KIND COST REQUIREMENT— If awarded, applicants will be required to provide 1:1 matching funds/in-kind contributions.

COMMUNITIES SERVED – Any Arkansas community.

PROJECT TIME FRAME – Up to 1 year, with the possibility of a 6-month extension that must be requested at least 30 days prior to the end of the performance period, and which must be approved by the Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator.

Proposal Application Checklist

- 1. Signed and dated Application Form (included in RFP package; you may also download a copy from www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/forestry/urban-community-forestry/.)
- 2. Project narrative (no more than 3 pages in length; see pages 5-6 for more information):
 - a. Project title and category
 - b. Purpose, objective, or mission statement of the applying organization
 - c. Purpose and objectives of the project (one concise paragraph)
 - d. Alignment with federal/state U&CF program objectives
 - e. Project audience and why they should be addressed
 - f. Condition(s) that will be changed because of the project
 - g. List of and timeline for all project activities (include project start date, project milestone completion dates, and total project completion dates)
 - h. Partnerships, participants, community engagement
 - i. Public benefits/benefit to underserved/disadvantaged communities (include deliverables and recipients)
 - j. Screenshot of geographic area from CEJST (see page 2)
 - k. Name(s) of project management and recordkeeping contact(s)
- 3. Maps, photos, etc. optional
- 4. Budget worksheet (included in RFP package; you may also download a copy from <u>www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/forestry/urban-community-forestry/</u>.)
- 5. State W-9
- 6. 501(c)3 status documentation (IRS letter or copy of annual tax filing) non-profits only

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Application Cover Sheet

Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Forestry Division Urban & Community Forestry Grant Program This page must be the first page of your application packet.

Project Information										
Project Title (10 words or less										
Category (1, 2, or 3)	:									
Brief Description o Project (3 sentences or less	:									
Applicant Informatio	n									
Organization Name	e									
Organization' Federal ID #	s	Unique Entity ID (UEI):								
Project Manager (Person responsible for project reporting and activities. All correspondence will be directed to this contact.)								contact.)		
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Title:										
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Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Forestry Division **Urban & Community Forestry Assistance Grants** Budget Worksheet

Instructions: Gray cells contain formulas and should not be typed in. If applying for IRA grant funding, do not enter any values in the "Cost share from grantee" column.

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Project Name:							
Contact Person:							
Grant Category:				I			
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NOTE: All grantees are required to maintain and submit written records that fully document all expenses.

*For an Excel version of this sample budget worksheet, please go to: www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/forestry/urban-community-forestry/, or email ada.ucf.grants@agriculture.arkansas.gov .

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*Matching funds portion of budget is only needed for projects in Category 3 (non-IRA qualified projects).

*For an Excel version of this sample budget worksheet, please go to: <u>www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/forestry/urban-community-forestry/</u>, or email <u>ada.ucf.grants@agriculture.arkansas.gov</u>.